

THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 5 | 1996

Victory
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Goran Simic

VICTORY

I passed through the country which became the world soccer champion that day. "Victory, victory..." cried the people running deliriously while the state flags fluttered behind them, bigger and longer than victory. It was a sight too rich for my poor eyes. Only when they left did I notice that someone had stolen my bagful of food.

Long ago, my father, shooting from a Russian submachine gun, entered our town to celebrate the victory with the people who could raise only flowers that year. "Victory, victory..." cried my father, thin as death adorned with flowers smelling of gunpowder. For patriotic reasons, he never went abroad later, and a graveyard fence is the only border he will have to pass.

That is why I do not like to meet him when I return from the market with an empty bag. "I did not fight for this, they are swindling the people," he shouts from the corridor, and mother drags him into the kitchen and pours him a brandy. And I, like a culprit, slip away from the house lest I ask myself aloud: Is that the same man I see on the photograph entering the town and crying words which mean nothing anymore?

Translated from the Bosnian
by **Amela Simic** and **Christopher Merrill**